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# SDI top Soviet propaganda target, ex-KGB disinformation expert says

By Tom Diaz  
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The Strategic Defense Initiative is the No. 1 target of Soviet propaganda efforts, a former KGB "disinformation" expert said yesterday.

"SDI is the No. 1 point of Soviet propaganda now," Stanislav Levchenko, a former Soviet KGB major, said at a Heritage Foundation forum on Soviet propaganda efforts against the space shield program. "It will be for a very long period of time."

He and other panelists at the conservative think-tank seminar predicted that the Soviets would turn up the heat against the SDI program in the coming months through so-called "active measures."

Such measures include spreading false information, overt propaganda and covert manipulation of Western democratic groups and news media through a network of Soviet front organizations, including the World Peace Council, World Federation of Trade Unions and Christian Peace Conference, according to Herbert Romerstein, a former House intelligence committee aide.

Meanwhile, the Soviet press agency Novosti published an article in Moscow claiming that the Soviets could reduce

the SDI program to "useless junk" by deploying dummy missiles, space mines and missiles specially coated to resist defensive weapons.

Soviet officials have scheduled a press conference tomorrow featuring Roald Sagdeev and Yevgeny Velikhov, two top scientists in the Soviet SDI program, and Georgy Arbatov, a propagandist and Kremlin adviser on the United States.

The reason for the intense Soviet effort against the SDI program, according to several Heritage panelists, is that the program would frustrate Soviet designs for world strategic superiority by matching their strategic defense program and countering their investment in offensive weaponry.

"When President Reagan launched his SDI effort, they literally went ballistic, pulling out all the stops against it," said John Dziak, a senior analyst at the Defense Intelligence Agency. "It could prove the undoing of the only thing that makes the Soviet Union strategically relevant."

Frank J. Gaffney Jr., deputy assistant secretary of defense for nuclear forces and arms control policy, said the United States must "come to grips" with the "essential disconnect between Soviet rhetoric" against strategic defensive sys-

tems and their "behavior" in support of their own defensive systems.

"The United States has come to rely very heavily on offensive forces, while the Soviet Union has continued to research, develop and deploy strategic defensive systems," Mr. Gaffney said.

Mr. Levchenko, who defected to the United States in 1979 and is now under a Soviet sentence of death, said the Soviets would "try anything to kill SDI." They can be expected in coming months to concentrate on influencing "smaller groups of professional people" in the United States, he said.

The Soviets will take special advantage of cultural exchange programs agreed to during last month's Geneva summit to flood the United States with anti-SDI propaganda, he said.

"They have already started this tactic in some groups ... with the exchange of 'concerned' people in the United States and some mysteriously 'concerned' people in the Soviet Union," Mr. Levchenko said. "They will make an effort to reach people on a personal basis ... [and] cultural exchange will be vastly used by the Soviets for this propaganda reason. They never use cultural exchange for any other reason."

Mr. Levchenko said a problem with ex-

changes among "concerned scientists," for example, is that "all Soviet scientists who are really concerned [with] anything that does not agree with the Soviet Union are either locked up in mental institutions or in jail."

Mr. Levchenko said many Americans in such exchange programs "think they are talking to a Soviet scientist not as a representative of the Soviet Union, but as a person."

"That is a very serious mistake," he said.

The Soviets will be aided in their disinformation effort, another expert said, because of the relative scientific and strategic ignorance of the U.S. news media.

"The Soviets do not have a tough nut to crack here in finding a receptive audience for what they are doing," said Ralph Bennett, a senior editor at the Reader's Digest magazine. "Add on top of this the fact that in great segments of the American media there is a general ignorance of strategic and technological matters."